

Newsletter published by the SHIBA HelpLine Regional Managers, for time-sensitive health insurance news. Please pass the information on to others!

The latest headlines:

How is Medicare fixing the Part D refund error?: Last week the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) sent refund checks by mistake to 230,000 clients who have monthly Part D premiums withdrawn from their Social Security checks. Clients affected by the error will have no Part D premiums taken from their Social Security checks in September. But in October, Medicare will take two payments out. As a result, CMS sent a follow-up letter to clients. The letter explains the error and provides clients with options for returning the refund, and information about future premium withdrawals. To view a tip sheet that includes this information, visit:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/downloads/PremiumWithholdRefundIssue.pdf> on the Web. For questions, clients may call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users may call 1-877-486-2048.

How can I help clients in the Part D coverage gap (donut hole)?: CMS has new tip sheets with some ideas. If you work with clients who have Medicare, visit:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/downloads/PartneTipSheetExplCovGap080206.pdf> on the Web. If you or a loved one has a Part D plan with a coverage gap, visit: <http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11213.pdf> on the Web.

CMS sends guidance to Part D plans about disclosing client information: Plans may disclose personal health information to any person assisting a client with their Part D coverage. This includes a family member or friend; staff working for a federal, state, or local agency that provides assistance for a public benefits program; a Congressional office; and a private patient assistance organization. For more information, read the frequently asked questions from the "What's New" column on the Office of Civil Rights Web site at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/>. Click on "FAQ on Health Plans Disclosing PHI to Persons Assisting Beneficiaries." For questions about this guidance, e-mail SHIP@cms.hhs.gov or call the interim SHIP Resource Center at 410-786-1520.

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